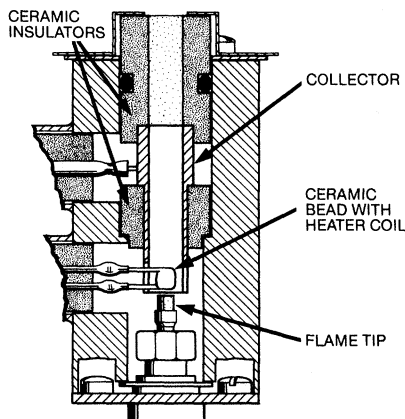


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LETTERS

Horatio Alger on Work

Carl N. Degler, in reviewing (7 July, p. 42) *The Work Ethic in Industrial America, 1850-1920* by Daniel T. Rodgers, writes that "None of Alger's heroes was ever shown working," an observation that he has apparently drawn from Rodgers' book and that he finds both startling and crucial. Unfortunately, the observation is incorrect. The second scene of Alger's first novel (*Ragged Dick*, 1867) shows the title character hard at work shining shoes on a public street, a scene repeated a number of times in the novel. While it is true that adventure occupies more of the plot than does the graphic description of work, a more important observation than this concerns the shift of values Degler reports: in writing about the accommodation to the new technology that obviated much independent work, Alger consciously substituted a new kind of mental work, a fact neither Degler nor Rodgers seems to notice. Here, for example, are the words of Dick's patron-to-be recounting his own rise from poverty: "'I entered a printing office as an apprentice, and worked some years. . . . But there was one thing I got while I was in the printing-office which I value more than money. . . . A taste for reading and study'" (chapter 11). The shift from physical to mental work gives the plot its shape, Dick's final triumph in this first novel of the series being his successful writing of his proper name, Richard Hunter, in a "hand so free" that he is hired for indoor work as a trusted clerk. Throughout the book we see graphically depicted a sort of work that AAAS members must all recognize: late-night study.

ERIC S. RABKIN

Department of English Language and Literature, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor 48109

Moscow Genetics Congress

The freedom of science and of scientists is a matter of grave concern to researchers throughout the world. In recent months, the government of the U.S.S.R. has unleashed an unremitting attack against our Soviet colleagues. Shcharansky, Orlov, Begun, and Goldshtein have all been given harsh sentences of imprisonment and/or exile. Sadly, these trials are only one part of a large-scale campaign of intimidation.

In Shcharansky's trial, science itself

was used as a weapon by his prosecutors. He was accused of having arranged for the transmission to Western intelligence agencies of "secret information" pertaining to Soviet research in genetic engineering. This is a politicization of science which we cannot countenance. Such accusations do not provide an atmosphere conducive to holding an international conclave that will surely be focusing on recent advances in recombinant DNA research.

We are convinced that at this time the most effective means by which Western geneticists can demonstrate the depth of their concern over these circumstances is to refrain from participating in the 14th International Congress of Genetics. Among the leading dissidents and refuseniks who concur with this view are Academicians Sakharov and Levich.

We therefore urge Western geneticists not to participate in this Congress, which is being held in Moscow so soon after these trials.

Having said that, we recognize that Western scientists are a heterogeneous group. Some geneticists will choose, for various reasons, to attend the conference. We hope that they will express their concern, both by discussing the issues with our Soviet colleagues and by visiting with the ostracized dissident and refusenik scientists.

ROBERT S. ADELSTEIN*

National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, Maryland 20014

PETER S. PERSHAN,* MARK PTASHNE
Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138

GERALD FINK

Cornell University, Ithaca, New York 14853

HOWARD M. TEMIN
University of Wisconsin, Madison 53706

ALFRED D. HERSHEY
Syosset, New York 11791

ERNST CASPARI
University of Rochester, Rochester, New York 14627

CHARLES YANOFSKY
Stanford University, Stanford, California 94305

MARCUS M. RHOADES
Indiana University, Bloomington 47401

RAY D. OWEN
California Institute of Technology, Pasadena 91125

JACQUES FRESCO
Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey 08540

ANN S. HENDERSON
Columbia College of Physicians and Surgeons, New York 10032

*Cochairmen, Committee of Concerned Scientists.